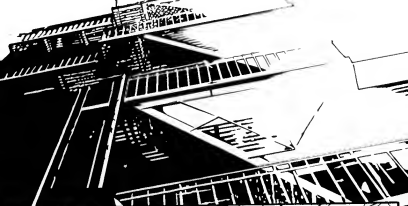


Chapter · IV ···

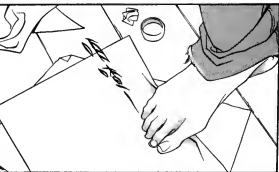


The Other Side Of The Mirror
鏡子的另一邊





DO YOU
HAVE TO
BE SUCH
A SLOB?
THIS PLACE
IS A MESS.



IF YOU
DON'T
LIKE
IT, YOU
KNOW
WHERE
THE
DOOR IS.





HOW
DID YOU
KNOW
THAT?



THAT'S
AWESOME.

SO YOU
GRADUATED
FROM THE
UNIVER-
SITY OF
SOUTH
CAROLINA.
HUH?



WHAT ARE
YOU GOING
THROUGH
MY STUFF
OR SOME
THING?



YOUR
DIPLOMA
IS LYING
ON THE
FLOOR.













POTASSIUM
CYANIDE.

YOU
REALLY
WANT TO
KNOW?

I
BOUGHT
IT OFF
THIS GUY
I KNOW.

YES,
I DO.



HUH?



WHAT
THE HELL
ARE YOU
DOING
WITH
CYANIDE?



HE WAS
CURIOUS--
COULDN'T
KEEP HIS
NOSE
OUT OF
BOOKS.
HE WENT
OFF TO
SCHOOL...

...AND THE
WHOLE TIME,
HE CAME TO
BELIEVE HE
COULD MAKE
SOMETHING
OF HIMSELF IN
THE WORLD.



HE BLEW
THROUGH HIS
SAVINGS.

BUT
WHEN HE
LEFT THE
FARM, HE
COULDN'T
FIND
WORK...
NO ONE
COULD.



WHY
DIDN'T
HE?

HE
REMEMBERED
HIS HOME,
AND WISHED
HE HADN'T
LEFT.

HE WANTED
TO GO
BACK...
MAKE
PEACE WITH
HIMSELF



WHEN HE LEFT,
HE MADE SOME
AWFULLY BIG
PROMISES. HOW
COULD HE FACE
THEM HAVING FAILED
SO COMPLETELY?

HOW
COULD
HE?

AND WHAT IF
THEY FOUND
OUT THE
THINGS HE'D
DONE?



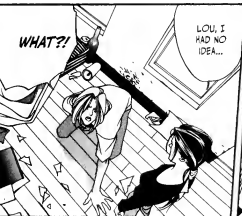
BEFORE
HE KNEW
IT, HE WAS
WANDERING
THE
STREETS...
AND DID
THINGS
HE'S NOT
PROUD OF

EMPTY.
HOLLOW.
ALL HOPE
GONE.
NOT MUCH
OF A MAN.



...FOR
AN END
TO IT...

WHAT
WAS LEFT
OF HIM
BEGGED
AND
PLEADED...



WHAT?!

LOU, I
HAD NO
IDEA...



DON'T
BE SO
GUL-
LIBLE.

IT'S JUST A
STUPID STORY.
FORGET IT!

...TO
PRESERVE
WHAT LITTLE
SELF-
RESPECT IT
HAD LEFT.



ENOUGH
OF THIS
CRAP!



What's the
matter with
him? Does he
really think I
like to hear?



C'MON,
LET'S
GET
OUT OF
HERE.

YOU CAN
STICK
AROUND IF
YOU WANT...
UNTIL THE
LANDLADY
SHOWS UP
LOOKING
FOR THE
RENT.



HEY, YOU'RE
BRAND NEW
TO THE
"INDUSTRY,"
HUH?



BINGO.



NEVER IN
MY LIFE
HAVE I SEEN
A WORSE
HOOKER
THAN YOU.



AFTER MY MOM
DIED, MY DAD
GOT REAL MEAN.
I LEFT HIM AND
RAN OFF WITH
MY BOYFRIEND.



YOU
FILTHY
SLUT!



EVEN ON YOUR
DEATHBED, ALL
YOU COULD
THINK ABOUT
WAS HIM!



BUT HE
DUMPED
ME AT
A GAS
STATION.



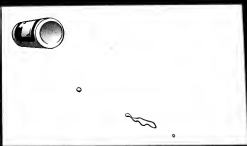
YOU'RE
NOTHING
BUT A
WHORE.
JUST LIKE
YOUR
MOTHER.



SEEMS
LIKE SO
LONG
AGO.

EVERYTHING
I HAD WAS IN
THAT CAR.
MY CLOTHES,
ID, MONEY.







WHEREVER,
AS LONG
AS IT'S AWAY
FROM THIS
GODDAMN
CITY.

SO, THIS
IS IT, HUH?
WHERE
SHOULD
WE GO?



BUMP



WHOA!

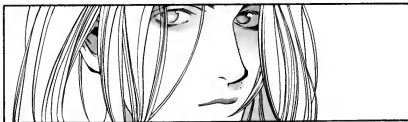
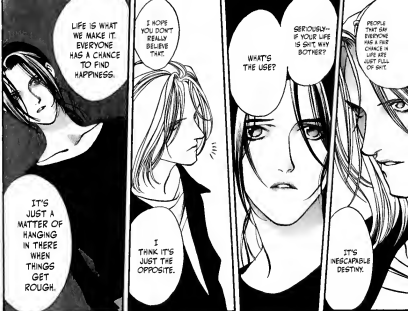


WITH OUR
LIMITED FUNDS,
LOOKS LIKE
WE'RE TAKING
THE BUS. LET'S
GET OUT OF
THIS STATE.

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK?









THE NAIVE
PURSUIT OF
HAPPINESS
THAT KEEPS
US LOOKING
FOR...HOPING
FOR BETTER
DAYS.

NAIVE.



AM I SO JADED
THAT I CAN NO
LONGER HOPE FOR
ANYTHING BETTER?
WHAT AM I TO
DO NOW?



DOES
ANYBODY
EVER
KNOW?



...BUT IT ONLY
TOOK A FEW SHORT
YEARS FOR ALL
THOSE DREAMS TO
TAKE FLIGHT AND
LEAVE HIM BEHIND.

HE DREAMED
ALL HIS LIFE
OF SOMETHING
BETTER THAN
THE LIFE OF
A FARMER...



SHIT.

BOOM

WE HAVE
TO GET
OUT OF
HERE.
NOW.

WHAT WAS
THAT? IT
SOUNDED LIKE
AN EXPLOSION.

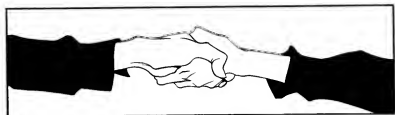


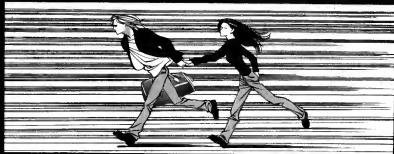
OW!!



SUNNY!
GIVE ME
YOUR
HAND!

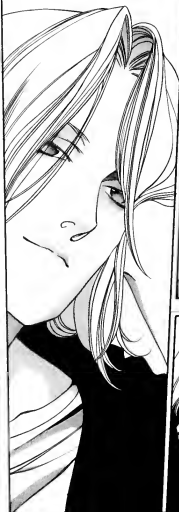










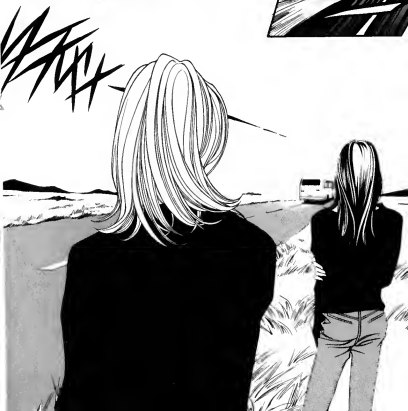




The Other Side of the Mirror

鏡子的另一邊

Chapter · V ·





OKAY, WE
CAN BE A
WHORING
TEAM. I'LL BE
A GIGOLO
AND YOU
CAN BE A
HOOKER.

WELL,
YEAH!
WE'RE DEAD
BROKE.
WE NEED
A PLAN.

WHEN
CLIENTS
WON'T PAY,
YOU CAN
KICK THEM
IN THE
BALLS!

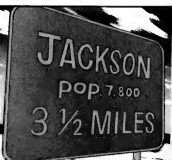


GREAT.
WHERE
THE HELL
ARE WE?

DOES IT
REALLY
MATTER?



LOU! I'M
SERIOUS!



JACKSON
POP. 7,800
3 1/2 MILES



A-HOLE!

HEY, HEY.
CALM
DOWN.

TAKE
A
LOOK
AT
YOUR-
SELF.

DID YOU
SEE THE
SMUG LOOK
ON THAT
ASSHOLE'S
FACE?

"I'VE FILLED ALL
THE POSITIONS"
MY ASS. IT
WAS BLATANT
DISCRIMINATION.

GEE,
THANKS.

HOLD
STILL A
MINUTE.

AND
WITH THAT
ATTITUDE, IT'D
BE A MIRACLE
IF SOMEONE
HIRED YOU.

YOU'RE A
WRECK--
YOUR
CLOTHES
ARE DIRTY,
YOUR
HAIR'S A
MESS.

YOU LOOK
MUCH
BETTER
NOW.

THERE.

STOP.
PEOPLE
ARE
STARING.

YOU'RE
ACTUALLY
GOOD-
LOOKING.

NOW MAYBE
SOMEONE
COULD
TAKE YOU
SERIOUSLY.

Before

Wow.
Pretty
sharp.

CHEESE!

GIVE
ME A
SMILE.

SO, I'M
YOUR
LITTLE DOG
NOW?!

GOOD
BOY.
HERE'S A
CRACKER.



PLEASE! I'M
NOT PICKY.
I CAN DO
JUST ABOUT
ANYTHING.

WELL...



LISTEN,
I WOULD
REALLY
APPRECIATE
THE CHANCE.



I DON'T
KNOW...



THIS ISN'T
A CHARITY.
YOU CAN'T
JUST WALK IN
HERE AND...

NOW,
NOW,
LET'S
NOT BE
RASH.

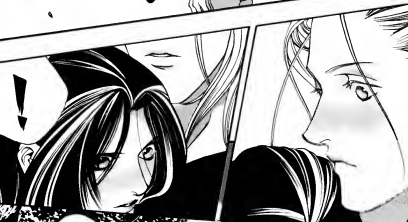
MISS,
MAYBE
YOU'RE
NOT
GETTING
THE
MESSAGE.





**THAT'S
WONDERFUL!**

WELL, IT ISN'T
MUCH. I'LL
BASICALLY BE
A STOCK BOY.
BUT IT SURE
BEATS DRINKING
FOR A LIVING.



ANY
LUCK ON
YOUR END?

YEP! I START
THURSDAY.
AND MY BOSS
MUST BE THE
NICEST GUY IN
THE WORLD!

OH, ER...
IT'S
OKAY.

OH...I'M
SORRY!
I DIDN'T
MEAN
TO...

RES



THIS
IS IT.

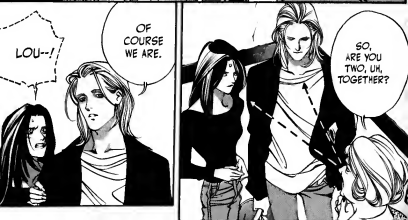


WATER,
GAS, AND
ELECTRICITY
ARE ALL
INCLUDED. IF
YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS...

!!!

LOU--!

OF
COURSE
WE ARE.



SO,
ARE YOU
TWO, UH,
TOGETHER?

...OVER
HER FACE.

A GUILTY
CRIME...

UH...
YES.

YOU AND YOUR
HUSBAND
LOOK PRETTY
YOUNG. YOU'RE
NEWLYWEDS?

WELL, ISN'T
THAT SWEET?
MY NAME IS
SARAH STONE.
THOUGH, SOME
FOLKS CALL
ME "SHARON
STONE," FOR
OBVIOUS
REASONS.

Young wives
are the best
company! They
remind me of
what I'd like
to be when I
grow up.

WELL, IT'S
GETTING
LATE. WE'LL BE
SURE TO CALL
YOU WITH ANY
QUESTIONS.
THANKS AGAIN.

BUT YOU
CAN JUST
CALL ME
SARAH.

OH, ALL
RIGHT,
THEN.

SLAM



ARE YOU
NUTS? WHY
DID YOU TELL
HER WE'RE
MARRIED?



SHOULD WE HAVE
TOLD HER THAT
YOU'RE A RECENT
EX-HOOKER...

...AND
THAT I'M
COMING OFF A
LONG PERIOD
OF UNEMPLOY-
MENT? THINK
SHE'D BE SO
KEEN TO RENT
TO US?



OKAY?

REALLY?

I ONLY SAID
IT SO SHE'D
STOP ASKING
QUESTIONS!



...TEASING
ME?

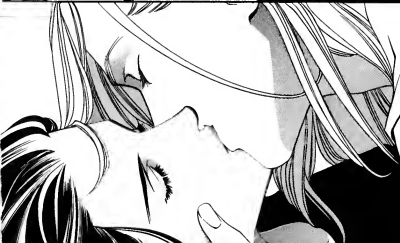
I thought you
were really
angry!

HEY! WERE
YOU...

YOU'RE
LIKE A LITTLE
KID ON THE
PLAY-
GROUND.

HEY!

THAT'S
IT! I TAKE
BACK MY
APOLOGY!









YOU
THREW
ME FOR
A LOOP
IS ALL.

I'M SORRY.
IT'S JUST
YOU WERE
SUDDENLY
SO SWEET.



FUNNY, I NEVER
NOTICED.

No wonder you
couldn't get
a girlfriend.



YEAH, YOU WERE
PRETTY MUCH
U.S.D.A.-CHOICE
ASSHOLE.



LOOKING
BACK,
THOUGH,
I KNOW
YOU'RE
RIGHT.



I GREW UP
WITH FOUR
BROTHERS
OUT IN THE
COUNTRY.



WAS I
REALLY
THAT
MUCH OF
A JERK
WHEN
YOU MET
ME?



I NEVER
REALLY GOT
MUCH OF
A CHANCE
TO LEARN
HOW TO
ACT AROUND
WOMEN.



WELL,
THAT'S
PRETTY
OBVIOUS.
BUT YOU
SEEM TO BE
CATCHING
ON.



WE WERE
EITHER
FIGHTING
WITH EACH
OTHER OR
HELPING
WITH THE
CHORES.



SUNNY...

...WOULD
YOU BE
ANGRY
WITH ME?



...IF I
LEFT YOUR
FATHER FOR
ANOTHER
MAN...



WOULD
YOU MISS
ME?



A black and white manga-style illustration. A man with long hair, wearing a hooded cloak, is pulling the hair of a woman with long dark hair. The woman is holding her head in pain. The scene is set against a plain background.

LET GO
OF ME!

FILTHY
WHORE!

A black and white manga-style illustration. A woman with long dark hair and bangs is looking out from behind a window. The window is shattered, with many pieces of glass floating in the air. She has a determined and somewhat sad expression. The window frame is dark and ornate.

NO MATTER
WHAT, BE WITH
SOMEONE
YOU LOVE!

A black and white manga-style illustration. A close-up of a man's face, looking down with a somber expression. His long hair is visible. He is wearing a dark hooded cloak. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

DO YOU
UNDERSTAND
ME?



WHAT
IF YOU
DON'T
KNOW
IF HE
LOVES
YOU OR
NOT?

MOM?





WHAT?
HERE?!

I JUST
SAW MY
MOTHER.

LOU?

YEAH?

NO, SILLY.
IT WAS
LIKE A
DAYDREAM.

SHUSH!
I'M BEING
SERIOUS.

DID SHE
GIVE YOU
A LECTURE
ON SAFE
SEX?

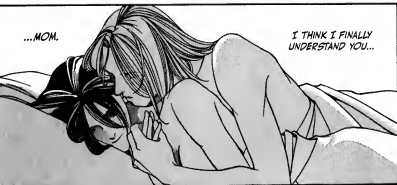
OH.
WOW, I'M
SORRY.

SHE DIED
WHEN
I WAS
LITTLE.



...BUT MY
FATHER NEVER
UNDERSTOOD
HER.

NO, NO.
IT'S OKAY.
I REALIZE
NOW THAT
SHE WAS A
VERY SIMPLE
PERSON...







GLAD
TO
HEAR
IT.



IT'S BEEN
GOOD.
THANKS
TO YOU.

SO, HOW'S
EVERYTHING
GOING?
GETTING
SETTLED IN?



OH, I'M
SORRY,
SIMON.
I'M BUSY.



HEY, ARE YOU
FREE FRIDAY
NIGHT? WE
COULD GO
TO THE MOVIES.



HA HA!
CRASHED AND
BURNED!

SHUCKS.



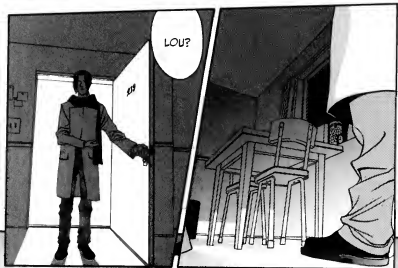
"I HAVE A
SURPRISE
PLANNED
FOR
TONIGHT!"

WHEW!



I WONDER
WHAT HE'S
GOING
TO DO?







NO,
DON'T
TURN
ON ANY
LIGHTS!



AAAHH!



WAAAA



WHOM
A LITTLE
BIT
JUMPY?



IT'S
YOU...

YOU
SCARED
THE CRAP
OUT OF
ME!

YOU
LOOKED
LIKE A
GHOST OR
SOMETHING.



YOU JUST
CAUGHT ME
OFF GUARD
IS ALL.

I HAD NO
IDEA HIS
SURPRISE
WAS GOING
TO BE SO
LITERAL.

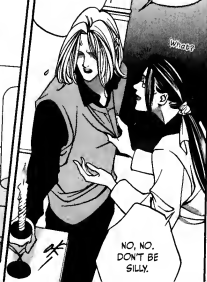
REALLY?

Of
course!

I DON'T
KNOW HOW
TO CREATE
AMBIANCE.
LET'S
FORGET
ABOUT IT.

SORRY.
I'M AN
IDIOT
WITH THIS
STUFF.

What?



NO, NO.
DON'T BE
SILLY.

Great... ♪

DO YOU
WANT ME
TO RUN
BACK OUT
AND GET
SOME
MORE?



WELL, SO
MUCH FOR
THE WINE.

I'M DOING
THE
COOKING
TONIGHT!

NOPE.
DON'T
WORRY.
YOU
RELAX.





DO YOU
MEAN IT?!

IT'S
GREAT!

THIS IS
THE BEST
MARINARA
I'VE HAD
IN AGES!

WELL? DO
YOU LIKE
IT? IS IT
GOOD?



CURRY?!

Yikes!

REALLY?
HUH. 'CUZ I
MADE CURRY.



SO, WHAT'S
SPECIAL ABOUT
TODAY? YOU
DID ALL THE
COOKING...AND
YOU SEEM
AWFULLY
NERVOUS.

CURRY.
RIGHT OF
COURSE.
THAT'S WHAT
I MEANT.

OKAY, IF
YOU SAY
SO. CLOSE
YOUR EYES.

↑
This
is also
the
usual.

I COULDN'T
POSSIBLY.

The usual. →

TAKE A
GUESS.







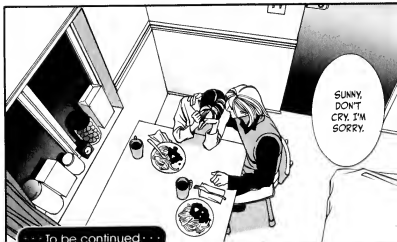
AREN'T YOU
HAPPY? AM
I RUSHING
THINGS?

SUNNY?
WHAT'S
WRONG?



I...

NO. IT'S
NOTHING.



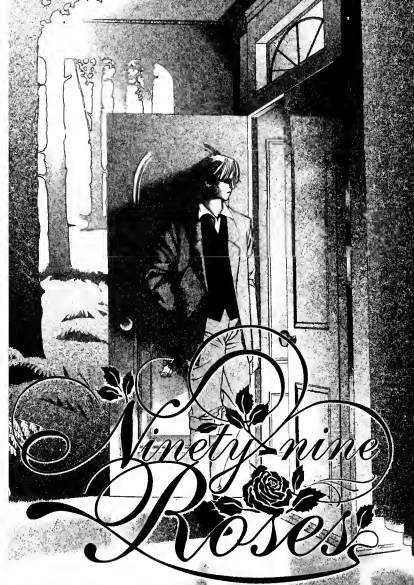
SUNNY,
DON'T
CRY. I'M
SORRY.

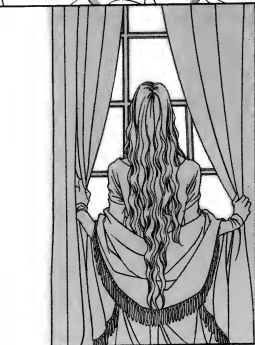
...To be continued...

99 Roses

HE WAS ALWAYS THERE,
LINGERING FOR JUST
A MOMENT, UNDER
THE BALCONY.







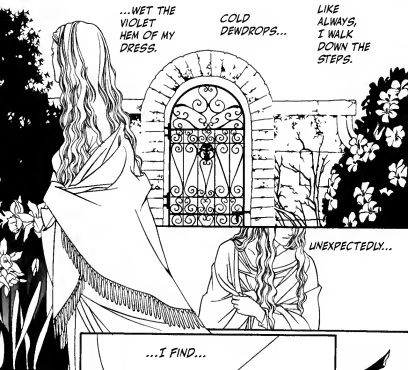
THE DAWN KISSES THE EARTH,
ITS LIGHT PAINTING
THE LAWN GOLD.

IT IS
DAY.

...WET THE
VIOLET
HEM OF MY
DRESS.

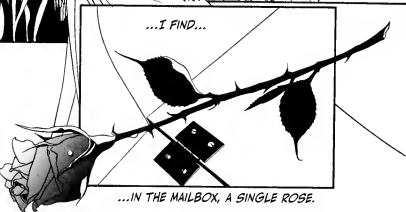
COLD
DEWDROPS...

LIKE
ALWAYS,
I WALK
DOWN THE
STEPS.



UNEXPECTEDLY...

...I FIND...



...IN THE MAILBOX, A SINGLE ROSE.



I TOUCH
THE SOFT
PETALS...



...AND THEN
LEAVE IT
BEHIND,
SOMEWHERE
ON THE
OUTER
WALL.



COULD THE
NEIGHBOR-
HOOD
CHILDREN
HAVE LEFT
IT?

THE FAINT
SCENT OF
CAMELLIAS
FILLED
THE AIR.

THE NEXT
DAY, A THICK
BLANKET
OF FOG
COVERED
THE WHOLE
TOWN.

WHERE
DID IT
COME
FROM?

MY
CURIOSITY
GREW.

ANOTHER
ROSE
IN THE
MAILBOX.



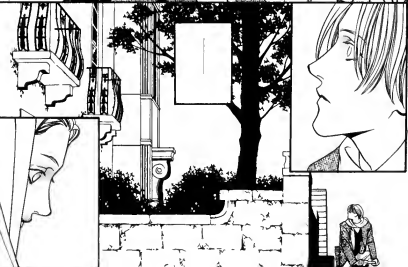
I HID
BEHIND
THE
CURTAIN.

...I
STAYED
INSIDE
TO SPY.

ON
THE
TENTH
DAY...

A WEEK
WENT BY,
AND THE
ROSES
CONTINUED
TO APPEAR.









HE UNEX-
PECTEDLY
CAUGHT
MY EYE...



HE
LEFT
WITH A
BASH-
FUL
GRIN.



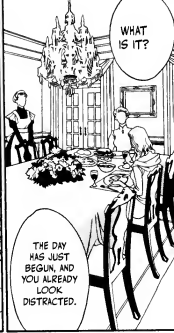
HIS PERSISTENCE BROUGHT A SMILE TO MY LIPS.



IT'S
NOTHING.



OH?



WHAT
IS IT?

THE DAY
HAS JUST
BEGUN, AND
YOU ALREADY
LOOK
DISTRACTED.

...RESERVES
NO TENDER-
NESS FOR
A BOY WITH
NOTHING.

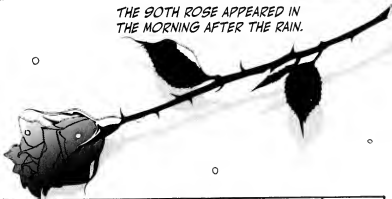
A WOMAN
LIKE ME,
WHO IS
REVERED
LIKE A
QUEEN...



ENDLESS
MAY
SHOWERS.



THE 90TH ROSE APPEARED IN
THE MORNING AFTER THE RAIN.



SOMETHING
STIRRED
WITHIN ME.



I
SECRETLY
TOLD
MYSELF...

...WHEN THE
100TH ROSE
APPEARS,
I WILL
DECLARE HIM
MY KNIGHT.

I PUT
THE RED
ROSE IN
A VASE.



AND I
POURED
FRESH
WATER.

NINETY-ONE, I COULD
HARDLY CONTAIN MYSELF
WHEN I SAW HIM.

NINETY-TWO. THOUGHTS
SWIRLED IN MY HEAD AS
I STOOD BEHIND THE
CURTAINS, HEART POUNDING,
INVISIBLE TO HIM.



NINETY-THREE.

NINETY-FOUR.

NINETY-FIVE.

NINETY-SIX.

NINETY-SEVEN.

NINETY-EIGHT.

NINETY-NINE--



...I STOOD
THERE BY
THE EMPTY
MAILBOX.

THE
NEXT
DAY...



THE DAYS WENT BY.
HE NEVER RETURNED.

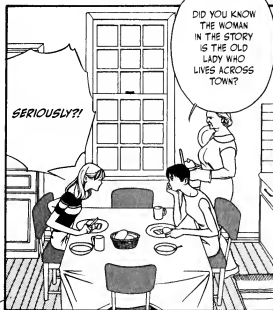


POOR
GIRL. NEVER
LOOKED AT
ANOTHER
MAN AGAIN.

BUT
THE
STORY
DIDN'T
END
THERE.



HAVE YOU
EVER HEARD
OF THE
STORY
ABOUT
THE 99
ROSES?



SERIOUSLY?!

DID YOU KNOW
THE WOMAN
IN THE STORY
IS THE OLD
LADY WHO
LIVES ACROSS
TOWN?

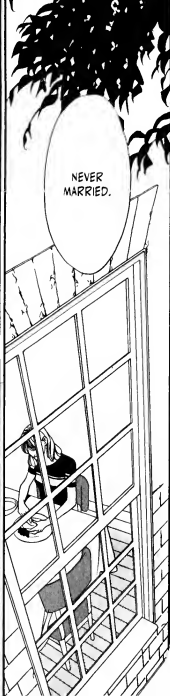


AND I DON'T THINK
THERE'S ANYTHING
ROMANTIC ABOUT
LIVING THE REST
OF YOUR LIFE
ALONE, FILLED
WITH REGRET.



IT'S SUCH
A ROMANTIC
STORY!

EAT UP.
YOUR
SOUP'S
GETTING
COLD.

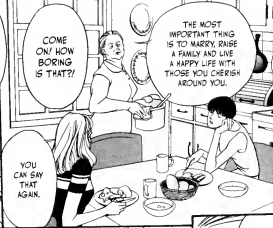


NEVER
MARRIED.



DON'T BE SO QUICK TO DISMISS MY IDEA OF ROMANCE. I HAD PLENTY OF "ROMANCES" WHEN I WAS YOUNG.

NOT ALL THAT DIFFERENT FROM YOUR STORY, EITHER.



COME ON! HOW BORING IS THAT?!

YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN.

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IS TO MARRY, RAISE A FAMILY AND LIVE A HAPPY LIFE WITH THOSE YOU CHERISH AROUND YOU.



EEK!

SOMEBODY'S TOUCHING MY THIGH!

HEY!

WHAT'S THE MATTER?



WHEN I WAS YOUR AGE--

AH!



HUH?



YOU OLD BASTARD! GET OUT OF THERE!



GRANDPA,
HAVE YOU
EVER HEARD
OF THE
STORY
ABOUT 99
ROSES?

YOU
DIRTY OLD
BASTARD!

HUMPH.





WHEN
I WAS
YOUNG...

NOT
YOURS.

99
ROSES?

...I
WORKED
FOR A
FLORIST.

BUT I
HAVE A
SIMILAR
TALE FOR
YOU.

...SO I
GATHERED
THEM
ALL UP.

?
Woo-hoo!
So many
roses...

I
THOUGHT
IT WOULD
BE A PITY
TO JUST
THROW
THEM
AWAY...

IN THOSE
DAYS, THERE
WERE ALWAYS
LEFTOVER
ROSES.

...I WOULD
PUT THE
ROSES IN THE
MAILBOXES
OF ALL THE
SINGLE
WOMEN IN
TOWN.

I believe a
young lady
lives here.

IN THE
MORNINGS,
WHEN I
DELIVERED
THE PAPER...

WHAT?!
I CAME
RUNNING
INTO YOUR
ARMS?

...YOUR
GRANDMA
CAME RUNNING
RIGHT INTO
MY ARMS.

AND WOULDN'T
YOU KNOW
IT? WHEN I
DELIVERED MY
99TH ROSE...

WAIT.
ABOUT
THE 99
ROSES...
DO YOU
THINK--?

YOU LIAR! AND
I THOUGHT
YOU ONLY GAVE
ME ROSES!

OUCH. COME
ON. WE'VE
BEEN MARRIED
FOREVER NOW!

AH HA
HA HA
HA HA!

COINCIDENCE,
I'M SURE!

COINCIDENCE!

HAR
HAR
HAR!

99 Roses
La Fin

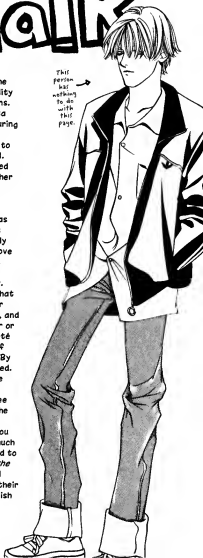


Jo's Talk

Although I have experience drawing manga, the reality is that I find myself lacking in the ability to depict emotional nuances in my illustrations. It was a big challenge for me when I decided to do *The Other Side of the Mirror*, especially during the production stage. Because of my lack of experience in doing sequentials, I wasn't able to accurately express what I initially had in mind. For example, Sunny's story should have included this: She was born in South Carolina to a mother who was warm and inviting, who loved to sing and dance but who lacked the least bit of sophistication. Her mother's marriage to her father was the result of impulse. But that was not enough to sustain their marriage. Sunny's father never knew about his wife's affair. Only when she died did he find out that his wife's love was reserved only for her daughter and lover. He was nothing but a clown. As time went by, Sunny grew to resemble her mother physically. Insecure and bitter, Sunny's father believed that his daughter would also leave him, just like her mother. She became the object of his hatred, and in the end, she left him as a result. For better or for worse, Sunny inherited her mother's naïveté and optimism. She never gave up in the face of obstacles and worked hard to find happiness. By chance, she met Lou--miserable and disillusioned. (And, may I say, she was very lucky!) But in the end, it was Lou's story that was depicted in more detail. When I was drawing the first three chapters, I was still in the stages of finding the right voice for the characters and the right rhythm for the story. Because of this, both Lou and Sunny ended up like wanderers, with not much to tend to. These are the places in which I need to improve. As I read through *The Other Side of the Mirror* and wish that I had done a better job, I would very much like to thank my readers for their unwavering support. I will certainly work to polish and improve my work for you.

Thank you!

This person has nothing to do with this page.



SWEET
RIDE.

WHAT
DO YOU
THINK?

My younger
brother,
Eric Chen.

NOT ONLY
DID HE
ADD FOG
LIGHTS,
UPGRADE
THE ENGINE
AND PUT
ON RACING
TIRES...

HE
LOVED
THAT
CAR.

...HE
ALSO
WAXED
IT EVERY
SINGLE
DAY.

AAAA!

MY
COUSIN,
SAM,
BOUGHT A
NEW CAR.

I don't really remember
exactly what it looked like.

CLICK

REMEMBER
TO MAKE
ME LOOK
COOL!

CLICK

WHEN
SAM WAS
GONE...

RIGHT?

NO. I
WOULD
NEVER
MESS
WITH
YOUR CAR!

YEP.

DID YOU DO
THIS?!

HEY! WHAT'S
WITH THIS
HANDPRINT?
AND IT'S
DENTED!

LATER
...

LEMME
SEE.

HEY! NEW
PICTURES?

A
COUPLE
WEEKS
LATER,
THE
PICTURES
CAME
OUT...

ERIC!

...The End...

INTERVIEW WITH JO CHEN



NAME: JO CHEN
SPECIES: LET ME CHECK.
CLASS: LOADS OF IT.
WEAPON: EXACTO KNIFE AND SHEETS AND SHEETS
OF VERY STICKY SCREENTONE.
SKILLS: CAN RENDER AN ANDROGYNOUS LOOKING
MALE IN 60 SECONDS FLAT.

Perhaps you could first tell us a little about your background. Where did you live, how was school for you?

Ja: I was born in Taipei on the island of Taiwan and was a pretty quiet and shy kid. I went everywhere my sister went and did everything she did. In fact, I didn't think that I could ever manage without her and it was simply a given in my mind that I would live with her and her future husband as her indentured servant when she finally married.

School was uneventful for me until junior high school when I started to make some friends because of my love of manga.

The *Other Side of the Mirror* is your first published comic, correct? What stage in life were you while making it?

Jo: Well, it's not my first published work but it is my first full-length manga. The previous stuff I did for publishers amounted to short stories. I love short stories and I included a few of them in both volumes of the TOSOTM. I was still in high school when I began plotting the story but I'd never been in love and I'd never worked as a prostitute so some of the writing was me attempting to stretch myself.

The series deals with some heavy issues of lost dreams and destitution. Can you share with us some of the inspirations for the plot and/or characters?

Ja: Most of the characters and their personalities are pretty self evident and fairly typical of disillusioned young people. I myself was never quite that directionless since I always knew what I wanted to do with my life. So, there again, writing the script was terra incognita for me.

Any reason why the story is set in New York City? Does the location mean something special for you?

Ja: Not really. I just knew that I wanted the story to take place in the U.S. and what greater U.S. city is there than the Big Apple? L.A. just doesn't have that great and grim aspect to it.

Your artwork is clearly a mature and more lifelike take on what we normally associate with "manga" style. What sort of background education did you have in art, and who would you say are your biggest inspirations?

Jo: Comics and cartoons were sort of frowned upon by the faculty at Fu-Hsin Art and Trade school, where I received my formal art education. (can't do an next page)

(can't'd from prev. page)

Manga was just something my friends and I did on the side, in addition to the traditional forms of art, graphics and design that were part of Fu-Hsin's curriculum. My style has changed much over the years. My first inspirations were Osamu Tezuka and Yashikazu Yasuhika both for their art and their storytelling prowess. Later, I became influenced by Yumi Tada. It is in this period that I worked on *TOSOTM* so you can see her influence in the way I drew my characters, even as I tried to create my own style. Today, I like a lot of artists but I would say James Jean and Zheng Wen are two artists that I respect quite a lot.

What do you find easiest when it comes to drawing? What's hardest?

Ja: The easiest? Hmm...you mean aside from hot guys? The hardest is attempting something I've not done before and pulling it off in a convincing manner. I'd never done anything like the *Racer X* series when I took that job and I worked hard to create cool interiors about racing cars, military cabals, etc. Backgrounds aren't really difficult but they can be as panderaus to create as they are necessary to the story.

Since *Other Side's* release, what other series or work has been keeping you busy? Any particular favorites?

Ja: Up until the middle of the summer, I was hard at work on both *Runaways* for Marvel and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for Dark Horse. There were other fun projects that I got to do so I keep as busy as I want to be. As for reading that keeps me busy, I am reading the Chinese translations of *Gundam The Origin* by Yashikazu Yasuhika, *Vagabond* by Takehiko Inoue, *Historie* by Hitoshi Iwaki and *Mushishi* by Yuki Ureshibara.

Aside from creating some amazing artwork, how do you like to spend your time?

Ja: Like most people, I enjoy seeing films, reading, eating good food and attempting to catch up on much needed sleep.

I've heard that you're sometimes recognized by your fans at conventions. Just how close are you to your fans, and have you had any funny encounters with them?

Ja: Yes, I've been approached by a few people at cons; especially San Diego Comic Con and Anime Expo. At Otakon, a few years back, this kid named Adam McClard, who is now a friend and a video game developer in China, started toiling me and my sister around the con. When the con closed down for the evening, we realized he'd spent all his money just getting to the con and had no place to sleep and was eyeing a park bench. So, we let him sleep on the floor of our hotel room, along with some of my sister's art students who came along with us. Unfortunately, he snored so we had to beat him with our shoes to quiet him down. Not sure how much rest he got but afterward I slept great.

Any last minute advice for your fans who may be aspiring to become a writer and/or artist?

Ja: I'll say what I always say and that is to practice every waking moment you have. Drifting off to sleep, sketch. On the con, sketch. Break between classes, sketch. And keep a dream journal by your bed. I often awake from crazy, funny and horrific dreams and jot them down while they are still fresh. Reading them later might provide seeds for new stories. Back to practicing; it's really the only way I know to hone one's craft to the point of excellence. That's what I did. I forsake dolls, boys, dancing and drinking in order to become better at what I did. It seemed to work for me.

Thanks again so much, Ja! We're all looking forward to the release of *The Other Side of the Mirror* volume 2!

BONUS GALLERY

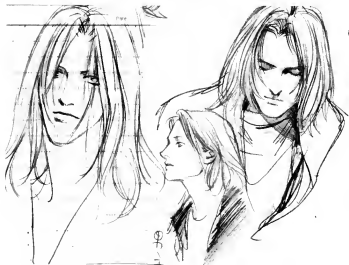
In celebration of *The Other Side of the Mirror* being released in English for the first time, creator Jo Chen was kind enough to donate new never-before-seen sketches and roughs used in the early production stages of TOSM. She'll even shed light on the process of making manga, and all the thought that goes into it.

As an artist, I'm always interested in the processes other artists use to create manga. I assume you guys might be curious, as well. So here I am, digging through boxes and boxes of ancient (to me ^_^) works to display for your viewing pleasure. I finally managed to retrieve some notes, sketches and thumbnails I did a decade ago. It seems I've lost much of the rough work I'd done. What I did unearth isn't in a very good condition. It does, however, bring back a lot of memories. It also surprised me how different my style and mindset were back then. Hopefully, I've changed for the better. Nevertheless, I hope you guys enjoy these dusty nuggets (Hmmm...that doesn't sound too appetizing, does it?)





I already had a very clear idea of Sunny and her appearance as I was sketching her. Although, when working on Lau, I began to realize that he looked too clean-cut, too gaudy-gaudy at the beginning, and that was not the idea I was going for. I had to end up borrowing the slacker look from Kurt Cobain. This new look reinforced his disheveled, directionless life.



Star Girls Magazine was running a Valentine's Day special issue and asked me to contribute a short story. However, I didn't want to write a saccharine piece like everybody else. So I did the total opposite by creating a plot that contained a cliché romantic opening to set false expectations then crush their goasy hopes at the end. Regarding the style of the architecture and the main character's attire, they are just part of the romantic set up. It was a happy cruel joke on my part. Heh heh.

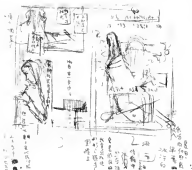
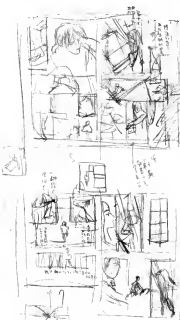


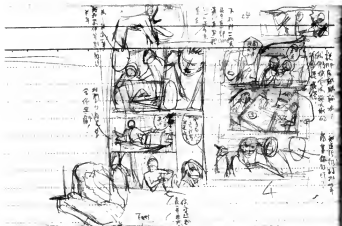
I actually turned in a gaudy number of sketches. They picked two as potential candidates for the cover of *Star Girls Magazine*, which was to debut my book in serialized form. Of what you see here, sketch #5 and another (not displayed here purposefully) which was my least favorite of the lot. I then had to produce more detailed pencils of the two selections, and after submitting them, I couldn't believe it when they announced the one that I hated most was their choice for the magazine's cover. I was horrified, but what could I do? This seems to be a recurring theme... Editors picking my least favorite piece. By way of explanation, I was told that this illustration, of all that I had originally given them, suited the style of *Star Girls Magazine* better than any of the others. Whatever. Up to this day, that one magazine cover remains on my top 10 least favorite illustrations, ever.



(Left) To keep the ideas flowing and to minimize any distraction while working on the details of the story, I always laid the panels out first as thumbnails and then rearranged and refined the panel composition later. Because I didn't leave enough room in the speech bubbles for the existing dialogue, I had to add additional simplified text around the margins of the pages, which I would review and edit later.

(Below) This is just another sample of how I lay out panels. I've always attempted to give a cinematic feel to the way I create and layout a page. It breaks up the monotony of having to view four to six perfectly bordered cubes filled with artwork on each page of a comic book.





What lies on the other side of the mirror...



AFTER ESCAPING THE CONFINES OF NEW YORK CITY, LOU AND SUNNY START A NEW LIFE IN A SMALL TOWN. JUST AS THINGS ARE LOOKING UP, WITH THE TRAUMA OF THEIR PASTS WIPED CLEAN, FATE STRIKES AGAIN... AND LOU MAY LOSE MORE THAN HE EVER HAS.

DON'T MISS THE HEART-WRENCHING FINALE TO THIS BEAUTIFUL STORY, ALONG WITH TWO BONUS SHORTS-- PEGGY AND FUNERAL OF THE STARS.